



*Supporting Working Families and Increasing
Access to High-Quality Child Care:
Voices from the Field*
Roundtables Report

Cover Note:

While these Roundtables were held prior to the outbreak of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, the themes and findings remain relevant today, potentially more so, as the nation struggles to care for the children of working parents. COVID-19 has introduced uncertainties surrounding the supply of child care, stemming from issues such as how to keep children and child care providers safe, parent and provider fears of the risk of COVID-19 exposure in child care settings, and potential changes in parental preferences (such as increased preference for smaller group settings like family child care homes). These Roundtables brought together a variety of child care stakeholders who have all been struggling with the impacts of COVID-19 on child care. This report addresses the full child care market, subsidized and unsubsidized, and highlights key themes and considerations that are important to building a stronger child care system post-COVID-19.

Acknowledgements

The Administration for Children and Families would like to thank the parents, providers, employers, state, territory, tribal, and local government officials, child care workforce and professional development, philanthropy, and all others who participated in these Roundtables nationwide. A special thanks to our regional and central office staff who, in partnership with the White House Office of Economic Initiatives, conceived of the Roundtables and, along with the Office of Child Care technical assistance providers, who spent many hours making sure the nationwide events surfaced valuable perspectives.

Brief Overview of the Roundtables

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Administration for Children and Families (ACF) focuses on finding innovative solutions to improve working families' access to affordable, high-quality child care. ACF also investigates how access to child care affects America's workforce, present and future. In order to inform federal policy, research, and technical assistance--and to help expand access to affordable, quality health care-- the Trump Administration committed to engaging a broad group of stakeholders and hearing directly from those providing and receiving child care services.



From September through November 2019, the White House Office of Economic Initiatives partnered with ACF to plan and implement a comprehensive stakeholder engagement strategy. To gather formal input from the field, ACF issued a Request for Information (RFI) in October 2019.¹ A critical element was speaking to those most directly impacted by child care access and affordability. To accomplish this, ACF convened a series of half-day Roundtables in ten locations across the country. These locations represented a variety of communities in rural, suburban, and urban settings:

- Region I: Hartford, CT - September 12, 2019
- Region II: Vineland, NJ - September 20, 2019

¹ <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2019/10/02/2019-21530/improving-access-to-affordable-high-quality-child-care-request-for-information>.

- Region III: Philadelphia, PA - September 19, 2019
- Region IV: Birmingham, AL - September 26, 2019
- Region V: Columbus, OH - October 7, 2019
- Region VI: Dallas-Fort Worth, TX - October 3, 2019
- Region VII: Kansas City, MO - October 10, 2019
- Region VIII: Arapahoe County, CO - November 18, 2019
- Region IX: Sacramento, CA - October 29, 2019
- Region X: Seattle, WA - November 4, 2019

The Roundtables included several panels with small and large group discussions. Parents, child care providers, employers, state and local officials (including a few tribes and territories), and innovators discussed barriers to—and practical solutions for—improving access to child care. HHS and White House leadership heard from stakeholder groups directly using, providing, or impacted by child care. By listening, ACF increased its understanding of what is needed to improve access to affordable, high-quality child care that meets the needs and preferences of working families.

Additionally, ACF gained a better understanding of how states are using increased Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) dollars to support low-income families.² Federal funding for child care has increased by 40 percent since 2018, and as a result, many states have been able to raise provider subsidy rates, eliminate wait lists, and/or reduce copays for eligible families. Finally, the Roundtables identified innovative child care business models, regulatory barriers, and methods to grow the child care workforce.



² CCDF is the primary Federal funding source devoted to providing low-income families that are working or participating in education and training with help paying for child care and improving the quality of child care for all children. It provides child care financial assistance for 1.3 million children each month throughout the United States, U.S. Territories, and Tribal Nations. CCDF investments in improving the quality of child care benefit millions more of the nation's children who do not receive a child care subsidy but participate in child care programs that benefit from these quality investments, such as teacher training. States have considerable flexibility under the law to set provider reimbursement rates, parent copays, regulations around required standards and training, and ratios, among other factors. For more information on CCDF please visit: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/ccdf-reauthorization>.

There was high turnout from all stakeholder groups. Many people recognized the importance of joining and participating in the conversation: over 900 participants attended the 10 nationwide Roundtables. Across all regions, HHS and White House leadership heard from 214 parents; 169 child care providers; 96 employers; 203 state, territory, tribal, and local government officials; 115 child care workforce development professionals; 57 philanthropic organizations; and 75 additional individuals about their needs and ideas on improving access to child care. Feedback surveys from the participants collected after each roundtable indicated that the majority of participants found that their voices and perspectives were heard and that the discussions were relevant and applicable to their needs.

This following report provides a summary of the feedback ACF heard from each of the stakeholder groups. Each of the groups had varying perspectives about the barriers, as well as the possible solutions to address them. The different groups did not all agree on the specific strategies that were needed, and within each of the stakeholder groups, very diverse perspectives were presented. The report concludes with a summary of high-level themes expressed across all the discussions and future directions for ACF to consider. This report is a recounting of the conversations that occurred at the Roundtables from transcriptions and attendee notes. This report represents a summary of views of the participants and is not a statement of the position or policy of ACF or HHS. The report does not represent ACF's support for, or endorsement of, the ideas conveyed by participants of the Roundtable.



Brief Summary of the Request for Information

In an effort to hear from a wider audience, ACF published the Request for Information (RFI) on “Improving Access to Affordable, High Quality Child Care.”³ The RFI received 239 comments. The comments to the RFI supplied a broad stakeholder perspective, and commenters included additional stakeholders, such as advocacy organizations, researchers, and Head Start commenters, than those who attended the Roundtables. The RFI commenters added more citizen voices to the discussion. Through the RFI format, stakeholders were also able to provide more detail in their comments about additional potential ideas and innovations. The demographics may have been different across the Roundtables and RFI, but many of the same themes discussed in the Roundtables were echoed in the RFI comments. Information from the comments are included throughout this report where appropriate.



³ <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2019/10/02/2019-21530/improving-access-to-affordable-high-quality-child-care-request-for-information>.

Stakeholder Perspectives

Parent Perspective

As one of our primary stakeholder groups, ACF invited parents from all socio-economic levels in the local areas where the Roundtables were held. As parents who use or want to use child care (subsidized and unsubsidized), they described what they were looking for in child care so that they could work and be confident their children are thriving. Questions were designed to better understand what parents' value most from their child care arrangements and to identify barriers parents may face when looking for child care that meets their needs. ACF asked parents to discuss the choices they face when looking for child care that meets their needs; to explain the choices that they make and how they prioritize; to reveal if and how parents are changing work habits/desires because of child care; and to identify what types of supports (e.g., transportation; child care close to home/work; flexible hours to accommodate full day and shift work; etc.) parents need to work.



What we heard... The parent perspective is often left out of key policy making

Over and over, parents thanked ACF for bringing them to the table and listening to their concerns and ideas for how to address the issues that exist in the child care system. It became clear that the parent voice is not often included at many levels of decision making, including local, state, and federal that impact their daily lives.



"My number one barrier is input into all of this." – Parent Roundtable Participant

As the primary consumers of child care, it is essential that parents are consulted about their needs and preferences related to the child care system. Therefore, local, state, and federal governments may be well served to bring policy discussions to parents on a consistent basis and incorporate their feedback in decision making.

What we heard...Vital information is not getting to parents

Many parents asked questions which indicated that they lacked necessary information to make the best child care choices for their children. Parents across multiple Roundtables were unaware of useful tools created by the government and other public and private organizations that were designed to make their lives easier, such as websites to help them find child care, information to help them understand the cliff effect,⁴ and checklists to identify a quality child care program.

“Some of the things that we suggested that would make our lives a lot easier: One is to provide information about the quality of child care centers to the parents; having a very simple graphical flyer when you take your child to their first or second well visit that explains ‘What does a quality child care center look like?’ ‘What are some questions that you can ask when going to a child care center?’”

– Parent Roundtable Participant



Many parents said that better communication and dissemination methods are needed so that they can get the right information in their hands when they need it. Some suggested that a national marketing campaign about federal resources could be helpful, and that the campaign should include information about childcare.gov and tools created by researchers and technical assistance centers.⁵

⁴ The cliff effect can occur when an increase in income results in a complete or partial loss of benefits that reduces or negates the family's financial gains. The cliff effect can potentially put families in the difficult position of choosing between employment opportunities (e.g. promotion or additional hours) or keeping their child care subsidy and other means-tested benefits.

⁵ ChildCare.gov is a partnership between the Office of Child Care and state child care agencies. The information on the [ChildCare.gov](https://childcare.gov) website is designed to help parents link to their state or territory child care website; to search for safe, quality child care by zip code; and to find support services in their community, services that families need to grow and thrive.

What we heard...Some parents need support aligned with their unique needs

“The hours of most child care is unaccommodating to most of the workplace – we are turning back the clocks to when women just entered the workforce.” – Parent Roundtable Participant

To meet their needs, many parents sought assistance navigating the complex child care system. Parents said they faced multiple, interconnected barriers, and those with unique needs reported that they could use additional support. Parents with non-traditional work schedules said that they struggled to find child care outside of traditional work hours (e.g., 9am-5pm). Several parents living in rural areas also struggled to find transportation to/from work and child care.

“The struggle is real. [The] challenge [is] with public transportation—cabs are driving people around, no bus[es] are here for public transportation.” – Parent Roundtable Participant



Parents of children with special needs, developmental delays or disabilities, or those with adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) said it was difficult to find providers sufficiently trained to support their child’s unique developmental needs. A few foster parents said it was hard to navigate both the child welfare and child care systems simultaneously and reported that they often do not qualify for the same supports as biological parents. Across several Roundtables, parents who speak English as a second

language reported (through interpreters) that they often could not find information translated into their native language. They wanted resources to help them clearly understand what child care is available to them, the prices for accessing services, and how to best support their children. Some parents also said that there were few bilingual providers who understand the benefits of dual language learning.

“I have a 5-year-old with autism and can only last a month before the behavior policy is not working and I lose care.” – Parent Roundtable Participant

*What we heard...*A desire for meaningful parental choice

“I am scared that I will be successful and then will hit the [benefit] cliff. It is a constant struggle, barely making it and if I got a part time job, we could do better but always afraid of what will happen. Then the narrative comes that we don’t want better.” – Parent Roundtable Participant

Tensions were evident during discussions about parental choice. Many parents shared that a lack of affordable, or any, child care options often prevents them from being able to choose their preferred provider. Home-based family child care was reported to be a highly valued choice for parents, with many expressing their support for finding ways to bolster the quality and reputation of child care in this setting. Some felt that they have no choice whatsoever when there is only one available home-based provider in a 50-mile radius or when only one affordable center is available.

“I want my son to have learning experiences all day... I don’t want to risk my son’s future because he didn’t have child care.” – Parent Roundtable Participant

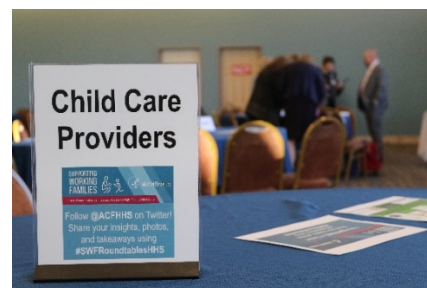


Moreover, parents have different reasons for placing their children in child care. They also have different definitions of “quality.” While the parents agreed they wanted safe child care, a good relationship with their provider, and a provider that loves their child, some parents prioritized an educational learning environment while others favored a convenient and flexible place for their child to go while they work. Safety and security were both predominant themes, but it is important to note that many parents discussed their children’s safety as a separate component from the quality of child care, as opposed to discussing safety as a component of quality.

“I wish every parent had real choice, what is most important and let me seek that out, but with the barriers the logistics we are forced into choices that have negative impacts over time.” – Parent Roundtable Participant

Provider Perspective

The Roundtables included a diverse group of providers: large and small child care centers, family child care, after-school providers, and child care partners working with or directly providing Early Head Start and Head Start. Some of the providers were located in their homes, the community, within schools or universities, and included new and experienced teachers and center directors. The questions were focused on learning about provider-specific experiences, opportunities, and policy barriers to operating high-quality child care programs. Providers were also asked if their early childhood workforce needed professional development and career pathways.



What we heard... The economics of child care present ongoing challenges for workforce recruitment and retention.

“I have 2 empty classrooms because I can’t find staff.” –Provider Roundtable Participant

Many providers spoke about the low wages and few benefits offered to the early childhood workforce. Several providers said they were losing their best teachers to Pre-K and elementary school classrooms because they could not compete with the 9-month salary and benefits offered by their local school districts. Other providers said it was an ongoing challenge to find and retain staff and pay them a livable wage. This was a significant problem in a strong economy with several jurisdictions increasing the minimum wage to \$15 per hour and increasing competition in hiring with other service industries that may provide better benefits or schedules. In some cities, working at the local Starbucks or in a retail store paid more than teaching at a child care center.



*"I took in more preschoolers
and let go of my toddler
program." – Provider
Roundtable Participant*

A number of providers described the tradeoffs they faced between trying to wait and hire more qualified staff versus hiring the first “warm body” available. Some admitted that they had to hire teachers who did not have

early care and education backgrounds simply because they needed adults to meet their teacher-child ratio requirements. Providers also wonder if they should opt to earn more money by serving older children with larger class sizes or accept less income by serving infants and toddlers requiring lower staff-child ratios. Other providers also acknowledged that because of their low compensation, teachers often lived at the same income level as the low-income families they were serving in CCDF funded child care.

What we heard... Training offered may not meet the needs.

Child care and family child care providers wanted more effective and flexible training and education opportunities and career pathways tailored to their new and seasoned staff. Some child care providers wanted more educational help and assistance, especially for free or affordable pathways to get their credentials and higher education degrees. Many providers also wanted approaches linking compensation to competencies and academic training. Others emphasized the need for flexible career pathways, such as night and weekend classes, that work for those currently employed in the field. Others suggested cohort models, such as small groups working simultaneously on their degree or credentials, with the state paying for training time at local community colleges or universities. Providers wanted the flexibility to convert training hours into credit hours so that teachers could earn “stackable” credentials. For older or veteran teachers in early care and education, providers suggested finding ways to grandfather in an educational requirement equivalency. Others suggested that more funding is needed for training and incentives, like debt relief, to attract young people to become early childhood teachers.

Providers at several Roundtables said that new training requirements were challenging their staff, who lacked the time to meet the requirements. Some suggested that online training is a good option but noted that some rural areas still do not have good internet access. With the new CCDF health and safety requirements, as well as new state training requirements, many providers also desired more flexibility and discretion to offer alternative training approaches for more experienced or part-time staff.

“The business side need[s] to be supported a little bit more for professional development for child care centers, and training hours were a big need, we have to diversify how we give trainings [...], because [we] can't get staff off all day long.” –

Provider Roundtable Participant

Several providers identified the need for more specialized training on several topics: mental health, substance abuse, trauma-informed care, child abuse prevention, successful business practices, and specialized training and care for infants and toddlers, as well as for family child care. Others felt that once teachers are hired, new teachers could benefit greatly from ongoing coaching and mentoring. In several regions, providers discussed the support they received while participating in Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships, which combined Early Head Start and CCDF funding. These grants allowed child care partners, including family child care, to enhance their business practices, support professional development, and assist in the completion of Child Development Associate credentials. Apprenticeships were also highlighted as a way for teachers to get training and support on a career pathway directly linked to a job with a higher wage after they completed the program. Several providers shared the importance of establishing strong family child care networks in order to build a learning community and peer support.



What we heard... Processes such as subsidy paperwork and monitoring can be overly burdensome and may need alignment.

Several regulatory or policy-related challenges were raised during all the Roundtables. The feedback highlighted some misalignment and misunderstandings with regulations and policies at the federal,

state, county, and local levels. In many cases, barriers identified were specific to state or local policies, rather than to federal regulations, and between conflicting requirements of separate social programs. More support and technical assistance for providers are needed to understand the source of the barrier – such as whether it was federal, state, or local child care regulations or licensing requirements. Not knowing who to reach out to with concerns made addressing barriers difficult for some participants.

“Paperwork requirements across multiple programs is challenging. The CACFP inspector wants meal sheets plus licensing inspector who wants to know my ratio and supervision sheets and the [Quality Rating and Improvement System] QRIS designator wants to know enrollment count plus health inspector for the city, and then early intervention working with certain children, Head Start and Pre-K. Wouldn’t it be nice if there was a model where they all know each other’s rules and all sat at the same table – maybe even save a couple of dollars if there was just one or two instead of 10 forms that we had to complete?” – Provider Roundtable Participant

The challenges with implementing the National Criminal Background Check requirements were discussed in multiple regions. It is also important to note that implementation timelines for background checks requirements vary by state. Several providers discussed delays with getting back the background check results, a delay that prevented a new teacher from starting work right away. The turnaround time for clearance varied and could take from 2 weeks to 6 months, presenting problems with hiring and onboarding staff.⁶

Other providers expressed frustration with some of their state subsidy policies. Many providers wanted reimbursement based on enrollment as opposed to attendance. They shared that daily attendance policies and procedures were more burdensome for families and also placed administrative burdens on providers who had to track payments in more detail.

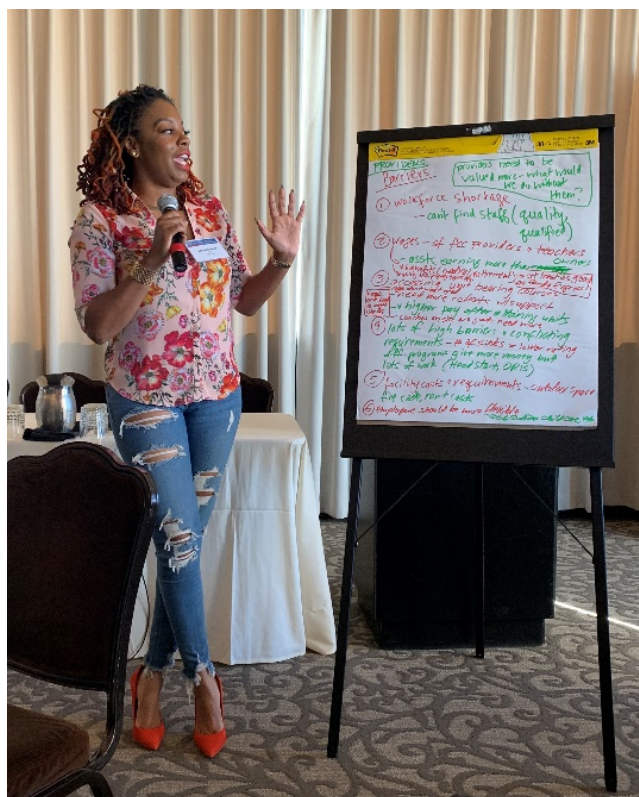
A number of providers also reported barriers with licensing and zoning rules for child care facilities, especially for after-school programs. They reported that there are different rules for programs offered during the school day versus after-school at the same setting, even though the same children may be attending both programs. Several noted the licensing and zoning regulations should have special considerations for family child care providers.

Some providers said that they wanted more information about the federal, state, and local regulations and policies about child care to be offered in their native languages. Some felt that they did not have direct, timely, and regular access to, and notification of, the policy changes that affect their businesses. They wanted better resources tailored to their unique needs. Some providers also raised the negative

⁶ More information and resources about the Criminal Background Check Requirements are available from the Office of Child Care at: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/resource/cbc-requirement-resources>.

impact of the “cliff effect” as some parents lose part or all of their child care subsidy if they earn more in income, presenting a barrier to movement up the income ladder or to stability in child care.

Several providers wanted more support in understanding and navigating the different public and private funding streams available to increase quality and support the viability of a child care business model. Providers expressed the need to align funding streams for early childhood, including CCDF, Head Start, Early Head Start Child Care, Pre-K, state general funding, and other private sources. A key feature of the new Preschool Development Birth through Five (PDG B-5) Grants is creating this alignment and partnership across programs for children from birth to five years.⁷ Navigating these funding streams rests on individual providers, who often lack the time and organizational capacity to do this effectively.



What we heard... Tension between the cost to run child care and the price parents can afford

“Rates are so low that the initiatives that were meant for quality improvements are just going to the providers’ bottom line.” – Provider Roundtable Participant

A number of providers said that some current child care business models face challenges because what parents can afford to pay is significantly less than the cost of providing high quality child care. Many providers expressed the need to better understand the true cost and price of high quality child care.

“Parents and providers need to work together to educate people [decision-makers] about what the true cost of quality care is. Those full costs, and the challenge that providers face to pay their employees well, are not well known.” – Provider Roundtable Participant

⁷ For more information about the PDG B-5 grant program, visit: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/resource/pdg-b-5-initiative>.

They said that there is a high demand for infant-toddler care, but it is also the most expensive because of the lower staff-to-child ratios and need to hire assistants. In addition, there are added costs for providers serving special needs children. Some reported that providers were leaving and going “underground” and choosing to be unlicensed providers because fiscal and regulatory burdens were high in the licensed space.

Providers said they need a stable income to sustain their businesses. Important strategies include a state’s use of contracted slots or paying by enrollment and not attendance, options encouraged by the CCDF program. Several providers also desired access to other sources of funding that are not always available to community-based or family child care providers. For example, state Pre-K funding is not typically offered to private providers. The new federal funding for PDG B-5 requires grantees implement a mixed-delivery system of early care and education for children from birth to five years, which should help alleviate some of these challenges.

“A true mixed delivery system for child care and Pre-K, in which private providers provide public Pre-K, is a solution to increasing access to child care, especially since working families need access to care beyond the traditional Pre-K hours, and children do not need to transition if already in the child care setting.” – Provider Roundtable Participant



Other providers shared innovative models for connecting family child care providers with child care centers for wrap-around care in the early morning or after-hours care. Several talked about being part of an Early Head Start–Child Care Partnership grant and how it can also help pay for a full day of quality care for those child care partners that are working with an EHS grantee.

Several regions highlighted use of shared services models, such as a partnership of child care providers that pools needs and shares resources, including staff, information, automated systems, skills, and funds. Such models promote greater efficiencies in back-office business functions, accounting, administrative support, and professional development and offer networks of peer support for family child care providers. Some providers creatively partner with other enrichment organizations to offer other programs including dance, sports, STEM courses, etc. at lower prices in exchange for space and students for a reduced price. Others suggested exploring whether there was a tax credit or incentive for providers for raising the quality of the center or locating centers in high need areas. Several state Quality Rating Improvement Systems (QRIS) also offer higher reimbursement rates and supports for those providing care rated to be at higher levels on their QRIS.

“Shared services models are imperative to supporting [family child care] FCC providers start and sustain their businesses. Resources should be provided where they are needed most, to help new FCC providers create and launch their business plans and sustain their businesses. These models are also important to provide cohort opportunities for training and professional development for FCC providers that meets their scheduling needs and does not result in debt. It's important for providers to have easy and affordable access to training. Shared services models can help achieve this.”

– Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) RFI Comment

Employer Perspective

Every roundtable included employers operating large and small businesses, with a few notable representatives who were also strong advocates for the importance of early childhood development and high quality child care. Employers were asked whether child care availability affected hiring or retention and if any shortage affected the productivity and profitability of their businesses. The discussions also explored the role employers have in supporting child care for their employees.



What we heard... Not all employers were aware of the connection between child care issues and their businesses.

“The issue of childcare had never really crossed my mind and if it were not for this meeting, I wouldn’t have thought about it.” – Employer Roundtable Participant

Several of the employers who attended were only beginning to recognize the impact of child care issues on their businesses. Several employers acknowledged that their own employees do not often share their child care struggles for many reasons, which can hide the problem. A few employers described learning that when staff do not have child care, they cannot come to work, and their business is not able meet its demands. Some also said that they saw chronic turnover and absenteeism as related to problems with child care. Turnover impacts their budget and one employer noted that replacing an employee can cost as much as eight months' salary.



"We miss out on good people because of this, just recently we had someone who did not take a job because her husband had shift work and it did not make sense financially, maybe in a couple years she said." – Employer Roundtable Participant

Many employers who attended the Roundtables recognized child care as a workforce problem; they were losing out on good workers and the lack of child care prevented them from growing their business. Some employers said they were also learning more about the child care industry because small changes in their employee work schedules may have large impacts on child care for their employee. Participants discussed that employers need to be aware that families sometimes decline promotions because they are on the borderline of income eligibility, and small increases in salary may have meaningful implications for the subsidies available to working parents.

“Employers focused on success of the company need to be focused on success of their employees and ability to take care of not just their job, but of their whole life. We have to understand if people constantly have to decide between their family and their work and they are constantly stretched, then you’re not going to have an employee who is totally engaged in their job. You’re not going to have an employee who is going to be willing to do that little extra and take care of the customer for your business – might not be in the employee handbook but really good for business.”

– Employer Roundtable Participant



Some employers have recognized the importance of family-friendly policies for working families. In some communities, employer toolkits and resources have been developed to identify strategies to promote employees’ work-life balance. Other employers are trying to communicate more effectively about tax credits available to families, existing resources within their tax and benefit

packages, and community support for working families. For example, some businesses shared they were reviewing their overall compensation packages to determine if they can offer paid parental leave, child care savings plans, more flexible hours, telework, and job sharing opportunities.

What we heard... Employers are trying to identify different ways that they can help, particularly for after-hours/shift employees.

Even employers who recognized the need for quality, affordability, and accessibility of child care and who allow greater flexibility to employees in terms of work schedules still struggle with how they can help their employees with child care. Some employers indicated that workers with 12-hour shifts, or 2nd and 3rd shifts, present the greatest challenge because child care in those non-traditional hours is often not available. Some employers also indicated that parents do not always have the ability to adjust their work time and businesses with a 24-hour workforce (e.g., hospitals, factories, and correctional institutions), in particular, are grappling with these issues for their employees. Several employers also identified transportation to and from work and child care as needs. Access to child care for sick children, after school care and other hours were also needed.

“...the county is so rural and transportation is so poor, even if I find a provider [that is] close enough to get to work, I might not have resources.’ These are the things our employees are struggling with.” – Employer Roundtable Participant

Some employers said they want more guidance navigating regulations, liability, and insurance for onsite child care centers. A few employers considered adding onsite child care and were concerned about added liability costs. They also wanted more tools and resources to help them understand the regulations and actions they could consider taking. Others suggested tax incentives to encourage child care centers to co-locate with business/employers and potentially create a



consortium of community providers and family child care providers available to meet the child care needs of local employers. A few employers want to see more investments in shared services models and focus on financial and business management for providers. Some employers are going even further by partnering with other sectors like transportation to help their employees get to work and obtain child care. In one inspiring businesses model, employers have prioritized hiring single moms and working with other community partners to provide on-the-job training. These employers also support working families by helping them access child care and other public and private resources.

What we heard... Tensions around providing benefits to employees with different needs and preferences.

One of the challenges raised in several Roundtables was the dilemma employers have in providing equitable benefits for their employees with and without children. In some cases, employers are beginning to hear that childless employees may be resentful of the extra flexibility offered to working parents. Other employers are recognizing that they need to consider a broader dependent care benefit package that covers employee needs not only for children but also for family members who are elderly or who have disabilities. To support their workforce, some employers are also thinking about increasing the supply of community child care and long-term care support needed by their employees. Several employers said businesses need to see the value of the returns on their investments in child care supports and family friendly policies. They also said that employers need to recognize the negative impact of the benefit cliff effect on their employees, and--in order to retain employees-- to identify strategies alleviating some of those tensions. Finally, a few said employers should recognize community-wide solutions and business partnerships with other stakeholder groups/entities (e.g., hospitals, colleges).

What we heard... Not all child care options are appropriate for all employers.

Different business sectors (e.g., retail or manufacturing) think about meeting employees child care needs in different ways. Some sectors have flexible work-at-home options, other flexible schedules, or other flexibilities. Some sectors have different hours of operation (e.g., traditional business hours or shift schedules) that influence when their employees need care.



“Our issue is that we are a 24-hour business; [our employees] need not just child care 9-5; we need second and third shift.” – Employer Roundtable Participant

Additionally, business size is related to the range of child care options that an employer may reasonably offer. Both small and large businesses can offer family friendly policies, but smaller businesses are often more limited in what they can do

financially. Larger businesses sometimes have the funds and spaces to offer onsite care, but depending on the fee structure, not all families can afford this benefit. One solution was to balance the request for partnering with, and the support for, child care according to the size of the business.

State, Territory, Tribal, and Local Government Perspective

State, territory, tribal, and local child care government officials are essential stakeholders as they manage and administer federal, state, territory, tribal, and local child care funding, and oversee licensing and regulatory requirements.

Representatives from almost all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia along with tribes and local governments attended the Roundtables and discussed the steps that they are taking to increase access to affordable, high-quality child

care. They were asked to specify which, if any, regulations were getting in their way, and to identify actions needed to streamline the process. Questions were designed to better understand the barriers negatively impacting the market, including specific licensing and QRIS requirements, as well as barriers to reducing the cost of providing care, increasing availability, or helping different types of providers remain in the market. ACF asked how well they are building supply and meeting parents’ needs, including gaps in service delivery and reducing early childhood education workforce turnover. ACF also asked the following questions: how they prioritize and make decisions to spend their limited funds or the increased federal funding in fiscal years 2018 and 2019; how CCDF decisions, the subsidy system,



and Pre-K programs influence the broader child care market; how they are conceptualizing professional development; and how government, at all levels, can improve access to affordable high-quality child care.

What we heard... It is too difficult to blend/braid federal funding across early learning and care programs.

Layering or blending and braiding multiple funding streams is a process for using multiple funding streams to support a common activity, initiative, or project while adhering to any restrictions on use of funds. Blending refers to wrapping funds from two or more funding sources together to fund a specific part of a program or initiative without allocating or tracking costs by individual sources. Braiding refers to two or more funding sources that are coordinated to support the total cost of a service for which revenues are allocated and expenditures tracked by different categories of funding sources. Braiding ensures that there is no duplication and that costs are shared proportionally.

“Blending and braiding funds allows states to align the eligibility criteria between two different funding streams, has the promise to improve families’ experience with the system and to reduce the administrative burden for providers. It would also allow states and local communities a greater ability to connect families with the right kind of setting to meet their needs for a more or less comprehensive program.” – Think Tank RFI

Comment



State, territory, tribal, and local officials reported employing these methods with funding from a variety of sources, both public and private, in order to support their child care systems and services. State, territory, tribal, and local officials said that these funding sources often come with many stipulations about how the funds can be used. For example, state and territory CCDF funds cannot be used to build facilities. No more than 15 percent of Head Start funding can be used to develop and administer a program. Title I, Part A Pre-K funding cannot be used to align the early learning and K–12 systems at the State level (although other Titles do allow this use).

“...local is where things come together, local funding merges with state and federal, we don’t have a problem with regulations, at all, federal not at all, align local and state regulations not an issue, the issue is the need for a local integrated payment model, we have providers that have multiple funding streams trying to balance all of that takes skill and time, we need state and federal government to think about more than cross walking system but an integrated payment model that does the work for providers. We are fortunate to live in a state that has done this for program requirements, but there’s so little money in the system that with low reimbursement rates and trying to make the numbers work it is a challenge.” –Local Government Roundtable Participant



What we heard... Different eligibility requirements and standards for different federal programs make it difficult to serve families holistically.

State, territory, tribal, and local officials also discussed how federal early childhood programs often have different eligibility requirements for children and families. For example, in order to qualify for CCDF, a family must be working and make under 85 percent of a state’s median income (lower at state option). To qualify for Head Start, there are more limited age requirements (under school age (e.g., 0-5) across Early Head Start and Head Start), and a family must be at or below the federal poverty line at program entry, with an allowance for a proportion of families that are over that income level. However, there are no work requirements. Head Start does not typically offer hours that align with parents’ work hours. To qualify for state or federal Pre-K funding, a family must meet age requirements, and there are usually no income requirements, but priority groups may be identified. Moreover, each federal, state, territory, and tribal program sets its own standards that state and local governments need to meet in order to receive funding. For example, while CCDF and Head Start are attempting to align criminal background

check requirements, Pre-K programs have different background check processes and requirements. Additionally, provider qualification requirements are different across all three programs – CCDF, Head Start, and Pre-K.

“...everyone agreed that it is not regulations but the barriers between the different funding streams that keeps them from working better together...” –State Government Roundtable Participant

Some state, territory, tribal, and local officials said they would prefer to have national standards across all federal programs. Additionally, many state, territory, tribal, and local officials shared that alignment of eligibility requirements across federal programs would enable their parents to more easily qualify for federal programs. Notably, state, territory, tribal, and local officials were not the only stakeholder group to express support for regulation in general. Many comments from the RFI supported regulation, especially to preserve existing health and safety requirements.

“Deregulation is not the solution to increase the supply or reduce the price of child care. Not only does research suggest that regulations are not the driving force behind a decline in child care supply, but regulations serve an important role in protecting the health and safety of children.” – RFI Comment

What we heard...Certain CCDF requirements are too difficult to implement.

Almost all state, territory, tribal, and local officials discussed the difficulties with coming into compliance with the comprehensive background check requirements. They identified issues with inter-state checks that are preventing many of them from fully implementing the requirement. Additionally, some states have had trouble raising subsidy provider base payment rates to a level that enables families using subsidies to have equal access to child care services, that is, to have child care comparable to that accessed by families not receiving a subsidy.⁸

⁸ Lead Agencies have flexibility to determine subsidy payment rate policies and practices (i.e., provider payment rates for subsidized care, parent copayments, whether providers can charge the parent an additional fee above the reimbursement rate to meet their market price). Base payment rates are the minimum rates paid to subsidy providers before any add-ons for meeting a quality threshold or serving a special population. According to the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act and Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) regulations base payment rates must be sufficient to ensure minimum health and safety and staffing requirements. Additionally, subsidy base payment rates must be set at a level to ensure equal access for CCDF eligible families to child care services that are comparable to the same range of choices as families that pay privately. Raising provider reimbursement rates usually results in increased access (i.e., more providers willing to accept subsidized children) but may result in a decrease in the number of children receiving subsidized care if program funding does not increase.

“...one barrier comes with the requirement for background clearances and the fact that a person needs to be fully cleared before they are allowed to work unsupervised.” – State Government Roundtable Participant



Several state, territory, tribal, and local officials said that more technical assistance and guidance on specific topics (e.g., equal access rate setting, criminal background checks) need to be provided in order for them to come into full compliance with all of the requirements under the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014 and the Final Rule.

“Our rates are still an abomination, and we have providers going out of business, you know, all the challenges that you all know. But I would say that [state] is in a real tough spot for -- we just did an analysis to look at what it would take to get our base rate to the 25th percentile, and it's about a \$6.7 million ask just to get to the 25th percentile. And we of course want to get our higher rates up to the 75th percentile.⁹ So we have a long way to go.” – State Government Roundtable Participant

⁹ Setting payment rates at the 75th percentile of a recent market rate survey remains an important benchmark for gauging equal access and demonstrates that CCDF families have access to at least three-quarters of all available child care.

What we heard...The tension of multiple demands for limited funding

State, territory, tribal, and local officials frequently discussed the difficulty of addressing all priorities with limited funding. Several discussed a clear tension between their ability to improve quality and provide services to more low-income families through publicly funded programs. Some reported that they struggled to reduce very long waitlists as they increased the quality of programs currently serving families. States suggested more funding would help them allocate funding to all priorities.

“The system is broken; providers cannot charge any more, parents can’t pay any more.” – State Government Roundtable Participant



Additionally, states talked about how they spent their increased federal funding from fiscal years 2018 and 2019. Table 1 presents the national picture for the most common uses of increased federal funding. A majority of states (76%; N=39) discussed using the additional funding to raise provider rates, including base rates (without a quality incentive/boost), tiered rates for some providers related to quality, and specialized rates for providers serving infants and toddlers or in child care deserts.¹⁰

“We increased rates by 23% with the increased funding plus state legislature contributions. It felt like [the state] won the lottery! For us, it is all about continuous quality improvement.” – State Government Roundtable Participant

¹⁰ The term “child care desert” is often used in a variety of ways to indicate a lack of or limited child care options available in a geographic location. Definitions vary in many ways including quality and type of care studied, ages of children served, and geographic level examined.

Table 1: Most common uses of increased funding across states

	Percent of States
Increased provider rates	76%
Reduced waitlist/Served more children	31%
Helped providers meet background check requirements	31%
Created new training or professional development opportunity	27%
Provided scholarships to providers for professional development and credentials	27%
Reduced/Eliminated parent co-pays or registration fees	24%

The other most common uses of increased funding included reducing waitlists or serving more categories of children (e.g., homeless, children in protectives services, families with slightly higher incomes); helping providers meet background check requirements by paying fees and creating automated systems; helping providers increase their quality by creating new opportunities for professional development and training or providing scholarships for professional development and higher credentials; and reducing or eliminating parent co-pays and registration fees.

“We have an opportunity to increase the conversation about professional development through councils, child care resource and referral, and family resource centers. Need to [prioritize] early childhood as a career option. It is not a trade; it is a profession.” – State Government Roundtable Participant

Other less common uses of increased funding include creating a workforce registry, improving a quality rating and improvement system, reducing the cliff effect, making improvements to consumer education websites, and hiring more inspectors to increase licensing capacity. Additionally, Tribal CCDF representatives discussed using the additional funding to build new facilities, reduce waitlists/serve more children, increase provider rates, and create new professional development opportunities.

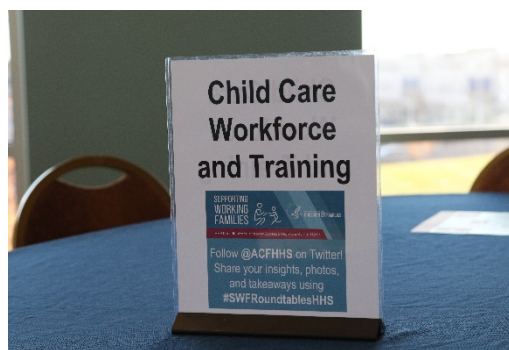
“I had to pay a \$90 co-pay. And with the budget [increase] Care 4 Kids, Care 4 Kids has given us double, so now he's able to go to school full-time while I'm also in school, and he also will be there while I work.” [Parent reporting benefit of increases in CCDF funding.] – Parent Roundtable Participant

Child Care Workforce Development Perspective

Child care workforce development entities are important stakeholders as they are often responsible for training and increasing the qualifications of the child care workforce.

Institutions of higher education, child care provider professional associations, and resource and referral agencies attending the Roundtables all had responsibilities related to child care workforce professional development.

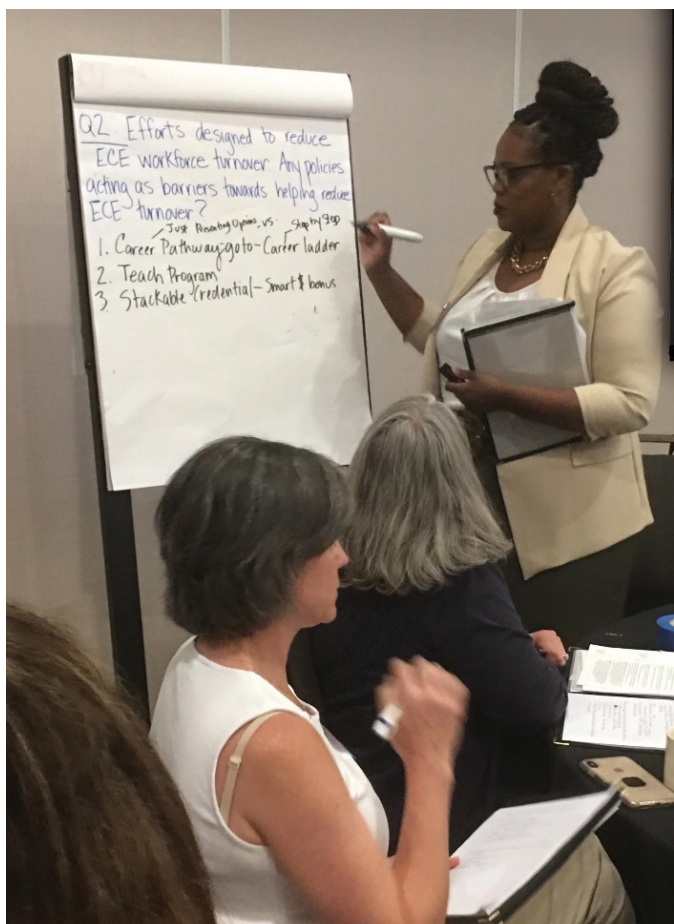
They discussed innovative practices, opportunities, and barriers that influence and support the child care workforce, its education, and professional development. ACF designed questions to better understand whether the programs have seen changes in provider participation in professional development; what efforts to build supply were underway in states; and which barriers inhibit this supply building. Questions also addressed whether alternate forms of professional development (e.g., apprenticeship and online coaching) face any barriers to implementation; and whether innovative professional development methods (in particular business skills/supports) were being incorporated into more traditional professional development models.



What we heard... The tension between higher education and child care training efforts

Many attendees discussed the existing tension between institutes of higher education and most child care training efforts. They reported that child care providers often do not earn a living wage or enough money to meet their basic needs. College professors in several regions admitted that they hesitate to recommend that students pursue the child care field because of the low-wages and lack of benefits. Some reported that when they do encourage students to pursue early childhood education, they steer them towards the Head Start, public Pre-K, or K-12 systems, where individuals with a BA can earn higher wages and even salaries with benefits such as health care and retirement. Others discussed that this system often leaves the care of children in traditional child care centers and home-based settings to individuals without early childhood certifications or degrees. Some felt that this situation perpetuates the cycle of under-valuing providers and the perception (and sometimes reality) that less generously funded forms of child care may be lower quality.

“There are a lot of incentives and we’ve raised the bars for teachers, but one of the unintended consequences is squeezing out the private child care because they cannot afford to pay their teachers...even at \$14 an hour we still lose teachers to the school system...a private child care provider cannot pay \$14 an hour...how do you meet ratio and group sizes when you can’t get a body in the room?” – Child Care Workforce Development Roundtable Participant



A recurring sentiment across the Roundtables was that child care providers should have many avenues (not just higher education and a BA) to increase their qualifications and move up the career ladder. Roundtable attendees were highly supportive of alternative pathways such as apprenticeship programs and online courses that lead to stackable, flexible credentials.

"The community college system is cheaper than a 4-year degree. But public sentiment around this isn't great. People think, if I'm going to invest this time and money to build skills within myself, then I'm going to build a program that helps children and families. We want to focus on that rather than ticking boxes for accountability and policy requirements. They want to build a program and make an impact." – Child Care Workforce Development Roundtable Participant

What we heard... Credits and credentials do not always transfer across systems and states. Participants noted that various child care employers and systems have different requirements for teacher qualifications. For example, in CCDF, states set the minimum qualification levels for providers accepting subsidies. In Head Start, all directors hired after 2016 and half of all lead teachers are required to have a BA, and assistants must have a Child Development Associate credential. Most states require teachers to have BAs in public Pre-K. Additionally, states have different credentialing and licensure requirements for child care providers; some states have moved towards requiring all providers to earn BAs, while others only require a Child Development Associate credential. Participants reported that these disparate systems and requirements make it difficult for providers to transfer their hard-earned training from one location to another. This, in turn, makes it difficult to build a quality supply of teachers and assistants.

"We need aligned and coordinated education and career pathways across systems." – Child Care Workforce Development Roundtable Participant

Articulation agreements are typically formal agreements or partnerships between two or more colleges and universities documenting the transfer policies for a specific academic program or degree. However, some states said that they struggled to get universities to accept community college Child Development Associate credentials and to align their BA programs in order to advance the field. Additionally, while the Child Development Associate credential is recognized nationwide, participants reported that state specific credentials and competency-based training often do not transfer from one state to another.



Several suggested that national articulation models or agreements should be aligned across systems (e.g., child care, Head Start, Pre-K; higher education) and states so that professional development and skills are easily portable and transferrable.

What we heard... Alternate pathways to increased credentials should link to reasonable pay schedules.

“Creating a variety of ways for ECE teachers to demonstrate competence (as in high CLASS observation scores) as a way to keep skilled teachers and avoid unnecessary higher education expense. Supporting early childhood apprenticeship models for on-the-job skill building as a way to build quality outside of the traditional higher education model.” – Child Care Workforce Development Roundtable Participant

A common theme emerging from the participants representing workforce development was that a four-year university degree was not the only answer. Alternative pathways to increased credentials such as apprenticeship models or online



courses that lead to stackable, flexible credentials are viable options to improving providers' skills. Additionally, options for competency-based credentials that encourage more people to pursue training should be explored as alternatives to the traditional credentialing models.

"The [Trump] administration's Industry Recognized Apprenticeship Program (IRAP) is a promising new model for expanding apprenticeship opportunities into new industries like child care. Apprenticeships can help alleviate the industry's labor shortage by eliminating the cost of entry into the field. Apprentices could earn a living while they work towards a certificate or degree, and they could expect a wage increase with each new level of education attained. IRAPs can also help preserve the industry's diverse workforce by providing an entry point for English Language Learners, mid-career applicants, and others who may face barriers in traditional education settings." – Child Care Workforce Development Roundtable Participant

Moreover, participants agreed that these stackable or competency-based credentials should then link to reasonable pay schedules (i.e., increases). As important provider skills increase, so should the pay associated with those skills.

"[It is] hard to build a sustainable professional pipeline when funding is not consistent." – Child Care Workforce Development Roundtable Participant

Philanthropy Perspective

Representatives from national, state and community-based philanthropic organizations participated in the Roundtables. They were asked to identify incentives needed to promote innovative child care models and public/private partnerships, and to name some of the barriers to implementing these innovations.



Foundation representatives shared the common sentiment that philanthropy is often best equipped to fund innovations (e.g., new/updated technology; new models for training and professional development), technical assistance, advocacy, and evaluation. Philanthropies were often willing to take risks that governmental entities and others cannot take. Philanthropies can initiate pre-consensus funding innovations; by laddering investments, they can be first to invest. In many cases, funders were interested in engaging as thought partners with government and community partners and seemed committed to focusing on outcomes and results (e.g., kindergarten readiness, social/emotional development, healthy development).



Participants said that philanthropy provides opportunities for leading, brokering connections, and helping to convene meetings that can facilitate strategic partnerships with various public and private sectors, as well as government partners (e.g., businesses, universities). To learn strategies that might increase high quality early learning and child care opportunities, several were interested in engaging with the workforce sector and other federal agencies like the Department of Labor and the Small Business Administration. Several mentioned philanthropy's interest in sharing its knowledge and expertise and engaging with other partners in thoughtful and strategic ways. They knew that their funding would not be enough to sustain programs over the long-term. Finally, philanthropists also felt they are well positioned to fund and work with advocacy groups in order to hone a narrative promoting child care and the importance of investing in the early years.

Key Overarching Themes

Systems Working Better Together – Alignment and Interaction

Stakeholders across all the groups shared the belief that the current systems touching families and children are siloed and fragmented. All stakeholders want better alignment of local, state, and federal funding streams and regulations (including monitoring, standards, and eligibility). Providers need better alignment of child care workforce training and higher education systems. Parents need better program alignment for seamless services that meet their needs, preferences, and benefit policies. As they increase their work effort and earning, they want to avert the cliff effect.

“We all know it cannot be solved by one entity so it [takes] a collaboration where everybody will put their heads together...it takes a village.” –Roundtable Participant



Moreover, stakeholders want a better understanding of the current interactions between systems. Parents and state, territory, tribal, and local officials need a better understanding of the policy and funding interactions between different provider types (e.g., Head Start, Pre-K, unlicensed) and the larger child care market. For example, they want to understand how publicly funded Pre-K influences the availability of care across all age groups. In order to navigate opportunities and barriers effectively, providers need a better understanding of the interaction among federal, state, and local systems.

“Contradictory zoning laws between state, county, and municipalities do make it more difficult for providers to start their own business.” –Provider Roundtable Participant

To build a better system and make the most of these partnerships, employers and state, territory, tribal, and local officials need a better understanding of the interaction between public/private partnerships.

“In a perfect role, I would see a federal government and business partnership to incentivize and subsidize child care; if we want Americans to work, we need this.” – Roundtable Participant

Communication – Getting Stakeholders’ Input and Providing the Information They Need

There was an overwhelming interest in more opportunities for listening sessions and meetings enabling stakeholder groups to talk and share ideas. Parents and providers were especially thankful for the opportunity to discuss their needs and share those needs with other stakeholder groups.

“As a collective group of directors, it is hard to actually sit down, like this; if we had more of these Roundtables...with the feds and centers and family child care, this would be better and help with this.” –Provider Roundtable Participant



Employers emphasized the need for multiple sectors to be at the table to help solve their child care challenges. When employers in leadership positions really understand child care as a return on investment, as a boon to human resources, or as a contribution to human development, they are more supportive and often become advocates.

“Empowering the business community to have the fluency, the language about how [child care] is impacting their businesses so that they can be at the table [...] a collaborative table for policymakers, other businesses, and other people in our ecosystem so that we can actually affect changes that are going to have a positive outcome.” –Employer Roundtable Participant



Across the full range of stakeholders attending the Roundtables, it was evident that the current child care system, with its disparate parts, faces a communication challenge. Parents lack the information they need about available child care options in order to navigate the nuances of quality.

“The obstacle between what is provided at government level and what is understood at government level and then what is applicable to a program is not reasonable. There needs to be another way.” –Roundtable Participant

Providers lack the information they need to improve their business practices (including options like shared services) as well as information on nuances among local, state, and federal regulations.

“Child care is not something that employees bring to their employer. They may just see child care as the cost of doing business, we have sick time available, but there is a feedback loop that is broken.” –Roundtable Participant

Employers lack the information they need about their employees’ experiences, as well as information about the best family friendly practices and child care models able to meet their employees’ needs.

“[The need for] coordination and integration with other programs is one of our key takeaways today.” –Roundtable Participant



To address families’ needs and meet federal requirements, states, territories, tribes, and localities need more information and understanding about flexibility within the current system. The needs of parents, providers, employers, and states, territories, tribes, and localities must be prioritized to improve the child care system through a variety of methods and partnerships.

*“Government programs are not easy for working families or employers to navigate.”
–Roundtable Participant*

Child Care Narrative and Messaging – Changing the Conversation

Stakeholders voiced the desire to change the conversation in order to bring about the system-wide change needed to improve working families' access to affordable, high-quality child care. All stakeholders expressed the need to give providers the respect they deserve for having chosen such an important profession – the care and education of our children and our future. Child care providers are currently classified in the service industry by the Census Bureau's North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) and the Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Standard Occupational Classification (SOC), but they are educating our children, whether they are in a private center, in a home, in public Pre-K, or a Head Start classroom.

“Retention is also about shifting the mindset, shifting the language – we are not “family child care providers” we are “early childhood practitioners”...we are educators.” – Provider Roundtable Participant

Moreover, employers and philanthropists pointed to businesses' need for a return on their investments in child care support and family friendly policies in order for more employers to come to the table to problem solve, and possibly change their business practices. Organizations such as the regional Federal Reserve Banks and local Chambers of Commerce have started building the narrative that businesses benefit by supporting child care and family friendly policies, but more work is needed. This further illustrates the need to craft messaging for a wide array of audiences – tailored messages for families, for chambers of commerce, for policymakers, for citizens without children. What brings employers to the table to discuss options for the employees will be different than discussions with parents about finding quality programs, how policymakers are encouraged to invest in quality programs and expand services, or how the broader public is engaged.



Ultimately, stakeholders recognized the need for a nationwide understanding that access to high-quality child care for all children will have a positive effect on America's workforce, present, and future – as well as those who depend on them. Many felt that without building public will for improving policies and

systems related to child care, there may be a lack the power and influence to move the needle on meaningful change.

“We need to start thinking of early childhood like streets [...]. It's infrastructure. We don't look for roads to turn [a] profit but we still put money into them. [...] Our early childhood structure should be part of our infrastructure, not because they are children and they are awesome and we love them, but it is part of our infrastructure, it's part of the work force and building a strong community.” –Philanthropy Roundtable Participant

Understanding Quality

There is still no common understanding or consistent definition of child care “quality” among stakeholders at the individual or group level. Parents talked about quality differently than the child care field did; sometimes parents discussed “safety” as separate from quality, as opposed to their seeing safety as a component of quality.

“[It would be a] luxury to understand what quality is.” – Parent Roundtable Participant



At the same time, stakeholders did not equate safety with quality. According to parents, building safety and background checks do not equate to quality.

“I can't walk away without saying we want more than safety.” –Parent Roundtable Participant

Moreover, at many levels, government policies do not align for many types of providers. Providers often feel that quality is a moving target and that they cannot stay abreast of quickly changing definitions of quality.

Compensation of the Early Childhood Education Workforce

“We’re trying to professionalize a system that is not funded to be professionalized.” – Roundtable Participant

The threshold issue facing the child care system improvement is compensation; it was foundational to every discussion among all stakeholder groups.

“Best care is a holistic approach ... a thriving child needs a thriving community; lack of respect from pay does trickle to the children and the quality care that they receive; I am concerned about burn-out of teachers.” –Roundtable Participant

Child care providers currently do not earn a living wage and often qualify for public benefits or do not make enough to afford child care for their own children without subsidy.

“Taking care of other people’s children is hard and should be a position we pay someone well to do.” – Roundtable Participant



Innovations and Future Directions

Across the 10 Roundtables, ACF heard from over 40 innovators addressing barriers discussed by the stakeholders. Table 2 illustrates the categories of innovations that were presented; some innovations fell under more than one category. Many of the innovations were aimed at increasing the quality of the early childhood education workforce by creating new professional development opportunities such as online coaching and incentives for increased credentials. ACF also heard about innovative ways to build supply, such as partnerships with housing organizations and rural loans to build facilities. Employers demonstrated support for their employees' child care needs with funding for back-up child care and on-site child care. There were also innovations around business supports for providers, such as shared services models, family child care networks, paperwork reduction technology, and substitute pools. Additionally, states presented innovative ways they were using legislation to build supply and overcome barriers, such as changing zoning regulations, creating new tax incentives, and using taxes to build facilities.

A brief look at the innovations presented is included below.

Table 2: Innovations to solve child care barriers

	Innovations Presented
Provider professional development, training, and incentives	23
Building child care supply	16
Employer child care models and employee supports	14
Family Economic Supports	5
Provider business supports	6
State legislation	3

Provider Professional Development, Training, and Incentives

1199C Apprenticeship Program/Family Child Care Hub

Cheryl Feldman, cfeldman@1199ctraining.org, Executive Director

Summary: The William Penn Foundation helps fund the 1199C Apprentice Program in Pennsylvania regional apprenticeship program which operates in high schools. High school students build work skills leading towards completion of a Child Development Associate (CDA) which articulates into an Associate degree or Bachelor's degree. Currently there are ten higher education partners who have agreed to honor 18 credits from the apprenticeship program (which is equivalent to six college courses). (<https://1199ctraining.org/ECE>)

All Our Kin

Jessica Sager, jessica@allourkin.org, Co-founder and Chief Executive Officer

Summary: All Our Kin is a nationally recognized nonprofit organization based in New Haven, Connecticut that trains, supports, and sustains community child care providers to ensure that children and families have the foundation they need to succeed in school and in life. To increase quality and sustainability, All Our Kin aims to transform the child care system through training and technical assistance for family child care providers. To increase access for underserved populations while improving quality, this organization has an aggressive goal of increasing their reach from 6,750 children to 20,000 children by 2021. (<http://www.allourkin.org/>)

Children's Village

Mary Graham, maryg@childrensvillagephila.org, Executive Director

Summary: Children's Village is a non-profit early childhood learning lab school for educational professionals and many higher education institutions in Philadelphia. Their Pennsylvania Quality Assurance System-certified educators offer firsthand experience and provide peer-to-peer guidance on best practice approaches to meet the needs of children and families. In addition to hosting workshops at Children's Village, they also offer off-site training at clients' programs, offering greater convenience and cost savings. To further their education and thus increase quality programming for children, teachers have the opportunity to receive scholarships through Teacher Education And Compensation Helps (T.E.A.C.H.). (<https://childrensvillagephila.org/professional-development/>)



Voices of Tomorrow

Zam Zam Mohamad, customersupport@tomorrowvoices.org, Chief Executive Officer and Co-Founder

Summary: Voices of Tomorrow (VOT) was designed to help refugee family child care providers gain a basic understanding of developmental screening tools required in Washington State. With support from local licensers and the screening tool's publisher, VOT used individualized coaching support to train providers to reliably use the screening tool in a culturally responsive way. (<https://www.tomorrowvoices.org/providers>)

Dick's Drive-In Scholarship Program

Jasmine Donovan, jasmine@ddir.com, President and Chief Financial Officer

Summary: Dick's Drive-In, a Seattle-based and family-owned company, provides a cutting-edge example of what employers can do to more equitably (provide benefits to) their employees. Educational scholarship funding is available for employees and can be used for college education, certification programs, training or child care assistance. The funds can be split among any or all of these options, depending on employee needs. Dick's Drive-In considers itself to be a gateway employer where individuals use these benefits to gain education and skills and then move into careers in a variety of Washington industries. (<https://www.ddir.com/employment/>)

Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate Program

Lisa Brochard, lisa.brochard@la.gov, Executive Director

Summary: The Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate Program prepares teachers to lead classroom interactions that promote child learning and development use, high-quality instructional tools that align with Louisiana's Early Learning Development Standards and apply a foundational knowledge of child development and learning. Effectively increasing the supply of higher quality teachers in Louisiana, the program results in a qualifying credential for the Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate, which is required for lead teachers in Type III licensed child care centers. (<https://www.louisianabelieves.com/early-childhood/preparing-and-certifying-teachers>)

FIND – A Coaching Model for Infant and Toddler Teachers

Gail Joseph, cultiv8@uw.edu, Bezos Distinguished Professor in Early Learning and Founding Executive Director of Cultivate Learning

Summary: Filming Interactions to Nurture Development (FIND) offers support for caregiver-child interactions by means of a video-based, strengths-based, contextualized coaching model for infant and toddler teachers. To target caregivers' positive, strengths-based practices, FIND uses videos of interactions between caregivers and children. Washington State uses FIND to support its infant/toddler provider coaching systems in order to increase positive interactions and overall quality throughout its early childhood education system. (<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/innovation-application/innovation-in-action/find/>)



Harris Early Learning Center

Diana Blackwell, dblackwell@harriselc.org, Director of Children's Programs, Auburn University-Harris Early Learning Center

Summary: The Harris Early Learning Center (HELC), located in Birmingham, Alabama, was created through a collaboration of local city government, the downtown business community, and higher education institutions. HELC is nationally accredited, hires highly qualified staff, is research focused, and is an internship site for graduate and undergraduate students interested in teaching and administration. Graduate and undergraduate students work under the supervision of teachers and directors to hone their skills and attain practical experience in areas such as administration, curriculum development, family life education, parent education, nutrition, and other areas of experience. HELC also offers needed community services by providing professional development and mentoring to staff from other child care programs. (<https://www.harriselc.org/>)

Louisiana Early Leaders Academy

Lisa Brochard, lisa.brochard@la.gov, Executive Director

Summary: The Louisiana Early Leaders Academy is a comprehensive 10-month, executive-level program for directors of highly rated, publicly funded early learning centers. By strengthening leaders in the field, the program helps expand access to quality early childhood care and education. Participating educators, known as fellows, are selected through a competitive application process for directors aiming to excel in their daily leadership of their early learning centers. Directors participate in useful state data collection and bimonthly online training sessions on key topics related to instructional leadership, receive a personal coach, and engage with a local peer group. (<https://www.louisianabelieves.com/early-childhood/lela-initiative>)

Ohio Building Supply and Supports for Child Care Infrastructure

Todd Barnhouse, tbarnhouse@occr.org, Executive Director

Summary: Ohio leveraging funding with the Early Learning Challenge Grant and the Preschool Development Grant to focus on professional development and supports and promote participation in Ohio's QRIS program, Step Up To Quality (SUTQ). By providing infrastructure supports for providers, the state plans to meet the goal of full QRIS participation of all publicly funded programs by July 1, 2020. Supports to providers included: increased rates, mentoring among programs, a wage supplement program, and information about criminal background checks in Ohio's professional registry. (<https://occr.org/spec/>) (<https://www.earlylearningresourcesohio.org/marketing-home/>)

Promising Practices to Increase Access to High-quality Professional Development

Gail Joseph, cultiv8@uw.edu, Bezos Distinguished Professor in Early Learning and Founding Executive Director of Cultivate Learning

Summary: The Coaching Companion is a powerful, web-based video feedback and annotation application encouraging coaches and educators to collaborate. Educators upload video and documentation of their teaching practices with children in their learning environment and receive detailed feedback from a coach or peer. The Coaching Companion helps coaches and educators work together in a collaborative partnership to track progress through goal setting, focused observation, and

reflection and feedback cycles. The Coaching Companion contains a robust media library featuring exemplar videos of effective teaching practices and research-based training materials—all within a password protected, secure platform. (<https://cultivatelearning.uw.edu/>)

Registered Child Care Apprenticeship Program (VCCAP)

Melissa Riegel-Garrett, Policy Director, Child Development Division, VT Department for Children and Families

Summary: The Registered Child Care Apprenticeship Program (VCCAP) is an apprenticeship model which provides on-the-job mentoring in licensed child care settings or in Agency of Education settings. Closely linked with the mentoring component, the T.E.A.C.H. scholarship supports each apprentice to complete college coursework, with funding support from his/her child care employer and stipends and reimbursement for course-related costs. Upon completion of the apprenticeship program, the Department of Labor awards a "Certificate of Completion as a Child Development Specialist." Transitioning to an Associate Degree scholarship through T.E.A.C.H. then becomes possible. (<https://www.vtchildcareindustry.org/>) (<https://vaecy.org/programs-and-services/teach/>)



Statewide Infant and Toddler Certificate Credential Program

Suzanne Burnett, suzanne.burnette@doe.nj.gov, Head Start Collaboration Director

Summary: In order to increase educators' specialized knowledge of infant/toddler development, and thus to increase the quality of care, New Jersey designed a NJ Infant Toddler Teaching Certification. NJ already had an Infant/Toddler Credential in place as well as a NJ Infant Mental Health Endorsement. A team of state-level cross-sector partners met to design a specialized teaching certification for those entering the field of infant/toddler education and for those changing careers or age-groups. The proposed NJ Infant Toddler Teaching Certificate would be endorsed and issued by the NJ Department of

Education. The proposed criteria, infant/toddler workforce data, and supporting documentation for the NJ Infant Toddler Teaching Certification were submitted to the NJ Department of Education in 2019 and is in the review process. (<https://www.njcite.org/nj-infanttoddler-credential/>)

T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps) Early Childhood Scholarships

Edith Locke, edithl@childcareservices.org, Vice President, Professional Development Initiatives

Summary: These scholarships support the ECE workforce to: (1) complete higher education; (2) work towards degrees; and (3) provide compensation upon degree completion. T.E.A.C.H. scholarships provide funding used to cover the majority of the cost of courses, books, and release time. Currently more than half the states in the country support T.E.A.C.H. scholarships. The WAGE\$ and AWARD\$ initiatives provide a salary supplement directly to an individual based on his/her educational attainment. AWARD\$ is targeted directly to infant/toddler teachers who are typically the lowest paid teachers in the field. (<https://teachecnationalcenter.org/t-e-a-c-h-early-childhood/>)

Virtual Lab School Project piloting with City of Columbus, Ohio

Sara Lang, lang.279@osu.edu, Assistant Professor, College of Education

Summary: The Virtual Lab School (VLS) pulls together research-based information on child development and supports adult learners with developing program practices for working with children and families. The goal is for learners to build practice-based coaching models. VLS is supporting publicly funded programs participating in SUTQ in Ohio (the state's QRIS). The comprehensive system adjusts the 13 core competencies and functional areas of the CDA into a virtual training module. A current pilot with the City of Columbus and Future Ready Columbus, trains a cohort of coaches. Using the VLS system, the pilot provides support to child care programs not currently rated by SUTQ; collects data to further refine their work and better serve programs and teachers. (<https://www.virtuallabschool.org/>)

Workforce Innovation Grants

Jennifer Stedron, jstedron@earlymilestones.org, Executive Director, Early Milestones Colorado

Summary: At the local level, Workforce Innovation Grants fund and evaluate innovations in compensation, recruitment, and retention of the early childhood workforce. The goal is to communicate back the lessons learned in partnership with individuals at the state level to see if an innovation could be sustained, approved, and moved into policy. The program has funded three years of innovations that include examples of internships, high school early childhood programs, community ballot initiatives, and fast-track early childhood teacher credential programs. (<https://earlymilestones.org/project/transforming-colorados-early-childhood-workforce/>)

Building Child Care Supply

Early Learning Indiana (ELI) Solution Series

Maureen Weber, maureenw@earlylearningindiana.org, President and CEO

Summary: In order to provide support and answers, Early Learning Indiana's (ELI) solution series provides targeted resources to families, providers, and employers. ELI maintains a network of eight

premier, community-based lab schools and focuses on equity in learning and early childhood development. These schools work closely with the Indiana Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning, Indiana's Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Network and a statewide network of supporters and stakeholders. They drive system-level support helping providers with their operations, program resources and costs; they also offer scholarships to educators for professional development. ELI offers consultation with employers to design custom child care solutions affordable to both companies and employees for both onsite and near-site care programs. ELI also partners with philanthropic organizations to provide grants to child care programs; it also maintains a list of available funding opportunities on its website. With support of \$1 million dollars from the Lilly Endowment (a private funder), ELI initiated a competition to build capacity with existing high-quality providers, to focus on increased access to infant and toddler care, and to promote innovative models of care. As a result of the competition (still in progress at the time of the Roundtable), ELI has seen stakeholders emerge across many settings (e.g., parents, providers, employers, philanthropy) and an increased emphasis on multi-generational impacts. (<https://earlylearningin.org/>)



Early Learning Ventures Shared Services Model

Judy Williams, jwilliams@earlylearningventures.org, Executive Director

Summary: Early Learning Ventures (ELV) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to expanding access to quality, affordable child care. Across Colorado and the nation, the organization focuses its efforts on improving the quality of child care programs offered at center and family child care homes. A large percentage of these are small, independent businesses that lack the infrastructure and resources to invest in quality improvements. ELV holds the license for the Colorado Shared ECE Resource Platform – a

one-stop shared services shop built for child care providers, professionals, and entities. Their shared services platform provides administrative services (e.g., HR needs, templates, forms, and regulation guides) and savings tools and useful deals for providers (e.g., deals on Kaplan, Lakeshore Learning, telehealth). (<https://www.earlylearningventures.org/>)

Fairfield (Iowa) Economic Development

Joshua Laraby, Joshua.Laraby@growfairfield.com, Director, Fairfield Economic Development

Summary: The Fairfield (Iowa) Economic Development Association partnered with Early Childhood Iowa. Together they held an economic development meeting with local child care agency professionals in their community. Attendees addressed issues of affordability, access and child care quality. They also brought local businesses together and completed an analysis of market needs coupled with strategic planning. The outcome was an incentive program that supported existing providers, created incentives for new home providers, and moved forward a plan for construction of a new child care center. (<https://growfairfield.com/childcare/>)

Housing Development and Early Learning Partnerships

James Madden, jmadden@enterprisecommunity.org, Director

Summary: The Housing Development and Early Learning Partnerships are a Washington state innovation that uses public/private partnerships to support funding for early learning facilities in affordable housing projects. Through a pilot initiative, the project hopes to demonstrate how leveraged funding can allow early learning facilities to start up without a large financial burden. (<https://www.enterprisecommunity.org/where-we-work/pacific-northwest/home-hope>)

Kellogg Foundation

Todd Klunk, todd.klunk@wkkf.org, Program Office, Kellogg Foundation

Summary: The Kellogg Foundation provides grants based on three child centered priorities: (1) education equity, (2) health equity, and (3) financial or employment equity. The Foundation has two grant approaches: (1) creating safe places for children to play in their local communities, and (2) national grants focused on partnerships with state leaders and grantees to determine how all can innovate together. The Foundation also does advocacy work with the National Governors Association, the Bipartisan Policy Center, and the First Five Years Fund. The Foundation further makes significant investments in data and data analysis. (<https://wkkf.org/>)

Mesa County 8000

Roxane White, rox@strategywithrox.org, Consultant, Mesa County Public Health

Summary: Child Care 8,000 is a community initiative to increase capacity to serve children in child care and support parents to work. Their goals include: meeting the needs of communities by doubling their licensed child care slots by 2022; engaging with community members to learn how they can break down barriers for facilities and families; and working together to increase quality of licensed child care across the board by bringing current high-quality facilities to capacity, expanding facilities, and opening new facilities. (<https://health.mesacounty.us/child-care-facilities/>)

Rural Child Care Innovation Program (RCCIP)

Heidi Hagel-Braid, heidihb@firstchildrensfinance.org, Chief Program Officer and Minnesota Director

Summary: First Children's Finance's Rural Child Care Innovation Program (RCCIP) is a community engagement process designed to increase the supply of high quality affordable child care in rural communities. The purpose of RCCIP is to guide communities in identifying the scope and size of their child care challenges, and to empower and support communities to develop solutions addressing these challenges. RCCIP is a public-private partnership in the state of Minnesota with public funding from the MN Department of Human Services added to private dollars. Using local expertise and resources available to rural communities, the RCIP looks for innovative strategies to sustain the supply of child care. RCCIP provides support for comprehensive supply and demand gap analysis, technical assistance on financial modeling, economic development expertise, and solutions generation.

(<https://www.ruralchildcare.org/>)



Rural Studio 20K

Rusty Smith, rustysmith@auburn.edu, Associate Director of Rural Studio

Summary: The Rural Center, an architecture program through the University of Auburn, is working to create a prototype for a low-cost home for family child care providers in West Alabama. The home would be efficient, durable, and affordable; and would allow child care providers not otherwise qualified to obtain a traditional mortgage, to develop as business owners and homeowners, while providing high-quality care. (<http://ruralstudio.org/>)

Start Young Project

Paula Neth, pneth@thefamilyconservancy.org, President and CEO

Summary: The Start Young project, run by The Family Conservancy, is a public-private collaborative funded with a \$3 million over three-year investment from the Kansas Children's Cabinet. These funds are contingent on a 1:1 match (or \$1 million each year) from the private sector for a combined investment of over \$6 million over three years. The program is designed to improve child care in Wyandotte County, Kansas, by increasing working families' access to high-quality, full-day, full year child

care. Aiming to impact 1,200 children in its first year, The Family Conservancy has partnered with Mid-America Regional Council, United Way of Wyandotte County, Juniper Gardens Children's Project, and Child Care Aware of Kansas to deliver the project. Additionally, there are currently 16 child care partners involved in increasing capacity and quality for children in this first year of the Start Young project. To increase access, the Start Young project provides grants and consultation to enable community centers to add new child care spaces; the Project also helps families with the child care subsidy application process, provides gap funding for parents to purchase care until the subsidy is processed, and provides supplemental scholarships for families to access child care. To support early educators, the Start Young project provides professional development opportunities, salary supplements which have increased teacher retention. (<https://www.thefamilyconservancy.org/start-young-project/>)

State and Tribal Collaboration

Sarah Neville Morgan, SNevilleMorgan@cde.ca.gov, Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction, and Kim Nall, knall@colusa-nsn.gov, Colusa Indian Community Council, and Tribal Child Care Association of California

Summary: The California Department of Education partnered with its tribal communities to develop an innovative way to collaborate through the Tribal Child Care Association of California (TCCAC). Many tribes were not included in California's Race to the Top because most of these types of grants required quality investments that tribes did not have. Inadequate investment has put tribal programs and communities at a disadvantage. TCCAC was a way to empower these tribal communities at the state level, and as a result of the collaboration, tribal nations were able to develop their own tribal standards for health and safety. A new region only for tribal nations was created for the QRIS (Quality Counts California) at the state level; the region allows tribes to develop their own system. California and TCCAC are part of the Project Harnessing Opportunity for Positive Equitable Early Childhood Development (HOPE) (Consortium, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation via the Build Initiative. Project HOPE supports leaders and teams promoting optimal health and wellbeing for children from the prenatal period to age five; it also supports shifting or realigning systems, increasing access to opportunities for young children and families; and it engages community members with lived experience as they define, design and develop solutions. In addition, PDG B-5 has allowed the TCCAC to take on tasks which will lead to more coordinated systems. (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/>) (<https://www.tribalchildcareca.org/>)

The Child Care Business Incubator Program

Leah McGlauchlin, lmcglauchlin@childrenscouncil.org, and Roberta Gonzalez, rgonzalez@childrenscouncil.org, Children's Council of San Francisco

Summary: The Children's Council of San Francisco is a non-profit organization that is both a resource and referral agency, as well as an alternative payment program (subsidy). The Council's innovation addresses the lack of supply of child care in San Francisco: it increases the quality of child care and makes child care more sustainable by focusing on business practices. The Children's Council developed a model that brings the needs of parents and providers together. Providers were taken through a series of courses which included identifying their own passion, creating quality environments that support children, messaging about their program in the community, and addressing administrative topics. There

was a special cohort for Spanish speaking providers. The results indicate that providers are beginning to enroll in community colleges and engage in good business practices.

(<https://www.childrenscouncil.org/>)

Employer Child Care Models and Employee Supports

Bright Horizons Back-Up Care®

Andrea Wicks Bowles, awicksbowles@brighthouse.com, Director Global Initiatives

Summary: Bright Horizons Back-Up Care® contracts with a network of in-home caregivers and child care centers to provide back-up care when needed. Benefits of this program for the workforce include on-demand access to a nationwide network of providers, and reduced stress for working families. Employers benefit from having a more productive workforce and a family-friendly culture which fosters employee well-being. (<https://www.brighthouse.com/family-solutions/back-up-care>)



Kansas Power of the Positive

Vicki Roper, vproper@kcsf.org, Prevent Child Abuse Kansas Director, Kansas Children's Service League

Summary: The Kansas Power of the Positive (KPoP) is a statewide coalition of about 40 agencies that is committed to all Kansas children growing up in safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments. To prevent adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), the coalition focuses on societal level interventions. It believes the conditions in which families live, including the influences of family friendly workplace

policies and practices, are key. Central to KPoP's long-term goals was to reduce the number of children exposed to 3+ ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) to under 10% by 2020. KPoP identified six strategies for accomplishing this commitment, and organized two cross sector workgroups to implement these strategies. An employee survey was developed in line with the 19 research-based conditions for family friendly workplaces identified by the CDC; the survey was distributed to local employers, who were also provided with survey results. As a result, there was increased dissemination of information on ACEs, the consistent use of messaging by employers, changes in employers' organizations, and increased funding for evidence-based programs. (<https://kagb.communityqi.org/>)

Pennsylvania State Collaboration with Industry

Tara Williams, tarawillia@pa.gov, Special Assistant to the Secretary, Workforce Development, Pennsylvania Department of Health and Human Services

Summary: The Pennsylvania Department of Health and Human Services has a process for meeting with local businesses to help them evaluate their needs for labor given their local child care supply. During these meetings, business partners are asked if they would like to help their new employees by expanding child care services into developing industrial areas. The goal is to build relationships among industries and agencies early so that all involved have an opportunity to contribute to the best solutions for child care.

Recovery Efforts after the Tubbs Fire, Sonoma County

Ananda Sweet, anandas@santarosametrochamber.com, VP Public Policy and Workforce Development, Santa Rosa Metro Chamber of Commerce

Summary: The devastating fires of 2017 resulted in a loss of child care supply and displaced many providers. Immediately after the fires, the Santa Rosa Metro Chamber of Commerce met with employers in Sonoma County to help them better understand the linkages between employers and child care. Employer-funded child care moved to the forefront of the conversation about child care supply. First 5 provided funding to increase lost slots. The Chamber's collaborative group identified employers who could support recovery. The messages were about looking at return on investment, recruitment and retention, and supporting Sonoma's long-term economic development as the County rebuilds its child care supply. The Chamber reported that Sonoma County has its first major employer taking on child care: the employer is opening up a center for its employees which will also have available community slots. (<https://www.santarosametrochamber.com/programs/employer-supported-child-care/>)

Susan Gilmore, sgilmore@nbcc.net, CEO, North Bay Children's Center

Summary: The North Bay Children's Center provided drop-in child care for first responders in exchange for mental health services for their child care staff after the devastating fires of 2015 that reduced child care capacity by almost 500 slots. These partnerships were developed in Sonoma County to address access to high quality child care for families of all income levels. First responders were unable to work because they had children at home, and teachers from closed centers were seeking work. The North Bay Children's Center serves 7 child care centers that were under evacuation status, and about 75% of the families in these centers are subsidized. The Center is still working on providing trauma-informed care. (<https://nbcc.net/>)

Family Economic Supports

Business and Single Mothers: A Partnership to End Poverty

Wes Gardner, wes.gardner@primetrailer.com, CEO, Prime Trailer; and, Kelly McFadden, mcfadden@bridgenetworkcolorado.com, Director, Bridge Network Colorado

Summary: The Bridge Network (TBN) recruits companies to hire single mothers who live in poverty. The position is a two-year internship during which mothers can develop stability in areas that often cause new employees to fail, such as reliable housing, child care, health care, transportation, and education, so that mothers can obtain their GED or access higher education. At the same time, they leverage support from government programs such as TANF, SNAP, CCCAP, Medicaid, and housing subsidies. TBN works with the moms to successfully navigate and utilize these often changing and difficult government programs. As the individual's income increases, TBN offsets the reduction of benefits by providing private foundation dollars when necessary, along with increased wages and benefits as workplace skills and job responsibilities increase. Upon completion of the two-year program, the intern receives a cash grant that can be used for child care, a down payment on a home, to pay off a debt, or whatever the single parent needs. These grants enable recipients to advance in their current job with their current employer. (<https://bridgenetworkcolorado.com/>)



Misericordia University

Katherine Pohlidal, kpohlida@misericordia.edu, Director, Ruth Matthews Bourger, Women with Children Program at Misericordia University

Summary: The Women with Children Program (WWC) at Misericordia University is one of only eight programs of its kind in the United States. The program empowers economically disadvantaged single mothers by providing the opportunity to complete a college degree. Single mothers must apply for undergraduate admission and be seeking completion of their first four-year degree; have no more than two children between the ages of 2 and 8; qualify for financial aid; and have a reliable car. Extensive

family enrichment programming is offered throughout the year. WWC provides mothers with support through individual goal planning, academic support and tutoring, career services, on-campus counseling, as well as parenting and informational workshops. Mothers are given priority placement for on-campus work/study opportunities and assistance with internship placements. Children are offered the opportunity to pursue extracurricular activities, including sports camps, summer camps, swimming lessons (all children must take swimming lessons), a children's garden, a library, and the Kids on Campus program during the school year. Subsidized child care is offered, and housing is available on campus. (<https://www.misericordia.edu/admissions-aid/ruth-matthews-bourger-women-with-children-programs>)

Pureland East-West Community Transportation Shuttle

Mike Grower, mgower@uwgcnj.org, Executive Director

Summary: Cross County Connection TMA was founded to help southern New Jersey residents access economic opportunities both through a direct route shuttle system and free transportation links to New Jersey Transit, in order to assist residents with no personal form of transportation who seek to obtain or to maintain employment. In 2018, Cross County Connection increased its ridership, which helped create economic equity and jobs. Shuttle service connects residents to jobs and other services necessary to keep those jobs such as child care. (<https://www.driveless.com/>)

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment & Training (E&T)

Kurt Messner, kurt.messner@usda.gov, U.S. Department of Agriculture Regional Administrator

Summary: The SNAP E&T program helps SNAP participants gain skills and find work that moves them towards self-sufficiency. Through SNAP E&T, SNAP participants have access to training and support services to help them enter or move up in the workforce. These programs also help to reduce barriers to work by providing support services – such as transportation and childcare – as participants prepare for and obtain employment. States may elect to offer one or more training and employment activities designed to support education, job search, workforce experience like apprenticeships, self-employment and job retention. These reimbursement grants may be expended as 50-50 funds to cover 50% of participants' expenses and 50% of administrative expenses. When states do not spend their full allocation, the remaining funds may be reallocated for SNAP E&T activities in other years. (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/et>)

Strengths-Based Human Services

Frank Alexander, faalexander@bouldercounty.org, Executive Director

Summary: In Colorado, Boulder County Housing & Human Services (BCHHS) is focused on improving child outcomes (e.g., early learning, brain development, and adverse childhood experiences) by breaking down program silos across government systems. To support any family--no matter its entry point--BCHHS uses social determinants and case management software (shared with the entire community) to customize preventative services. (https://issuu.com/bcdhhs/docs/coh_executive_summary?e=23355236/64633441)

Provider Business Supports

Early Childhood Collaborative

Shannon Cotsoradis, scotsoradis@nebraskaeearly.org, Chief Executive Officer, Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative

Summary: The Early Childhood Collaborative created the Community Scholars Program, which expands the availability of CDA classes offered at no cost to community child care providers in their shared services network. Additionally, a new partnership with Wonderschool, aims to increase supply and provider capacity in Omaha, Nebraska. Wonderschool partners with child care networks, governments, community organizations, and directly with providers to increase the supply of high quality, financially sustainable, child care options. Wonderschool helps new providers get licensed, launch, and operate their programs (including billing, rate setting, and payment collection support); through utilization of the Wonderschool marketplace, platform and community, the Early Childhood Collaborative also supports existing/already licensed programs. Together, Wonderschool and NECC will provide existing and aspiring providers with the technology, curriculum, mentorship, and resources necessary to run a successful family child care program. Through these efforts, NECC and Wonderschool aim to increase the number of quality, affordable child care programs across the state, including in rural areas.

(<https://nebraskaeearly.org>) (<https://nebraskaeearly.org/wonderschool/>)



Greater Newark Shared Services (GNSSA)

La'Keisha Ciprian, lakeisha.ciprian@gmail.com, Project Manager

Summary: The Greater Newark Shared Services Alliance (GNSSA) seeks improvement in operational stability and service quality in the following areas: health services; professional development; food services; classroom services; program leadership; substitute teachers; and marketing and enrollment. The innovation specifically addresses the need for substitute teachers. The first year saw success by onboarding 40 substitutes. Collaborating with Rutgers University, Montclair State University, and

New Jersey City University, GNSSA implemented an online work schedule platform to simplify substitute-staffing requests; it also secured a 20% discount for member use of the platform. The Alliance recruited applicants from job fairs, college visits, and online postings. Furthermore, it reviewed applications and identified candidates for centers to interview. GNSSA assisted substitute candidates with completing required pre-service training and submitting background checks. It also provided interested candidates with initial applications to obtain state substitute credentials. Several substitutes with 60 or more hours of college credits applied for the State Substitute Credential, the fee for which was paid by GNSSA grant funds. GNSSA substitutes provided 177 hours of classroom coverage from January–June 2018. (<https://programsforparents.org/shared-services/>)

Ross Foundation

Tres Ross, tres_ross@therossfoundation.org, Executive Director

Summary: In order to improve the quality of child care in West Virginia, this organization seeks to invest in its communities. The Ross Foundation has provided grants to fund shared services models and found these models to be effective. In the shared services model, smaller businesses join together to share in joint ventures, such as bulk purchasing of supplies, janitorial services, human resource support, landscaping, and substitute pools. Instead of each business having to bear all costs itself, costs are shared by all who use the services. The Ross Foundation gives grants to groups who find innovative ways to increase quality in their communities. (<http://www.therossfoundation.org/about-us/mission>)

State Legislation

Community Funding of Early Childhood Education via Ballot Initiatives

Lucinda Burns, lucinda@earlychildhoodoptions.org, Executive Director

Summary: Early Childhood Options (ECO) is a Colorado CCR&R and Early Childhood Council that has successfully united a community around the need for a strong early childhood care and education system. Over the last 10 years, ECO has led multiple local ballot initiatives to fund priorities such as universal kindergarten, child care facilities, teacher salaries, and most recently universal Pre-K for all 4-year-olds. (<https://www.earlychildhoodoptions.org/>)

Keeping Kids Close to Home Act

Diana Vu, diana.vu@sen.ca.gov, State of California, Office of Nancy Skinner, California District 9

Summary: Under the Keeping Kids Close to Home Act (SB 234), cities and counties in California cannot require licensed small and large family child care homes to get a zoning permit or a business license. The law directs the California Department of Social Services to inform child care providers that they can file a grievance through the Fair Employment and Housing Act if they are treated unfairly by their landlords. Property owners are prohibited from refusing to rent to a provider or evict solely on the basis of having a family child care home. Proponents of the this law assert that, with these changes, more family providers can open and/or become large family child care homes.

(https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201920200SB234)



Request for Information

The responses to the 2019 RFI on Improving Access to Affordable, High Quality Child Care included several innovative solutions to address the barriers described by the stakeholders. Creative financing options that help improve current facilities and build new facilities were offered. For example, competitive grants to support center and home-based child care improvements, renovations, and rehabilitation; public-private partnerships like collaborations between employers or organizations; and tax credits that incentivize parents, business leaders, and child care providers to invest in quality. To help identify where new facilities may be needed, recommendations included a national assessment of the nation's child care facilities. Moreover, ideas to reduce child care deserts were provided. Recommended strategies included increased rural broadband access and "Hub Licensing" (or "micro-centers"), which allow one director to provide oversight for multiple small centers in a specified area with administrative services consolidated and provided by centralized staff.

Future Directions

- In response to the "[White House Principles for Child Care Reform: Increasing Access to Affordable, High Quality Child Care in America](#)," HHS created policy recommendations and guidance in accordance with what was learned from the Roundtables and RFI.
- The Office of Child Care (OCC) and the Office of Planning Research and Evaluation (OPRE) are planning a symposium on Equal Access to complement and further the work begun with the Roundtables. Delayed due to the global Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, in the interim OCC and OPRE continue to provide guidance to states, territories, and tribes on Equal Access issues, including a recently released white paper on promoting sustainability of child care programs.
- OCC's Preschool Development Grants Birth through Five renewal grants aim to help states align their early childhood systems.
- OPRE and OCC's technical assistance teams are engaged in several projects that directly relate to the major themes from the Roundtables. Examples of OPRE and OCC funded work include:

- Assessing the Implementation and Cost of High Quality Early Care and Education
- National Survey of Early Care and Education
- Are Higher Subsidy Payment Rates and Provider-Friendly Payment Policies Associated with Child Care Quality?
- The Role of Licensing in ECE
- Home Based Child Care Supply and Quality
- Training of Trainers: Strengthening Business Practices for Child Care Programs
- Equal Access Components Checklist
- Rate Setting: Do you have the right data for the task?
- The Office of Early Childhood Development (ECD) is working across ACF programs and with federal and non-federal partners to support collaboration and partnerships. By disseminating joint guidance documents and other documents to the field, ECD aims to prioritize early childhood development, including high quality child care and early learning.
- OCC and the Women’s Bureau at the Department of Labor are working together on several overlapping initiatives, such as assessing the cost of child care, expanding business training for child care providers, providing information for employers about child care options, and re-examining how child care providers are classified in government statistical counting (i.e., BLS, SOC, NAICS).

